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THE EGYPTIAN RING

BY
NELLIE TOLMAN SAWYER



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THE
EGYPTIAN RING

BY
NELLIE T. SAWYER

THE
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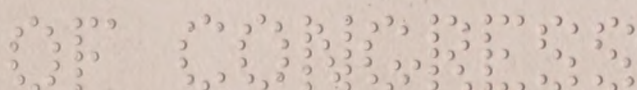
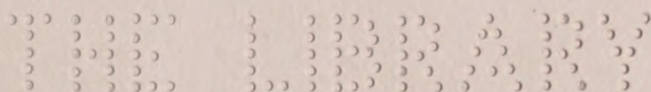
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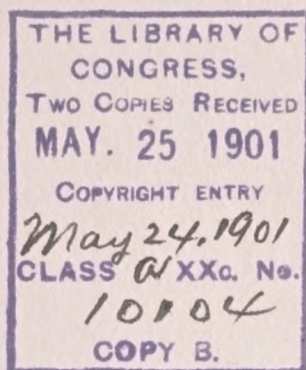
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TO BEATRICE,
MY LOVING AND DEVOTED DAUGHTER,
MY FAITHFUL AND APPRECIATIVE FRIEND,
THIS STORY IS DEDICATED
BY HER MOST
AFFECTIONATE MOTHER. 1

THE EGYPTIAN RING.

CHAPTER I.

“Can it be? Are you living, my queen?
I thought I had lost you forever.”

—W. W. STORY.

MR. MARK ANTHONY, bachelor, sat in his luxurious breakfast-room, on Beacon Street, Boston, one bright, crisp November morning, leisurely enjoying his rolls and coffee; in one hand he balanced a cup of fragrant Java, while the other held the morning paper which he read while he sipped his coffee.

“Ah! what’s this?” he exclaimed, and he re-read the following lines:

“TO ART LOVERS.

“The lovers of Art in Boston and vicinity will be gratified to learn that the famous an-

tique painting of Cleopatra which has created such a furore abroad has, after many negotiations, been secured for exhibition in America. It is now well hung at the Museum of Fine Arts, Copley Square, where all who admire antique Art should not fail to visit it. It is stated upon authority that there is no one on earth at the present day who knows anything of the past history of this remarkable picture, but it is believed by antiquarians and Egyptologists to be the most nearly correct of any of the numerous pictures painted of the lovely and unfortunate Queen."

It would be well to explain at this point that Mr. Mark Anthony was a wealthy gentleman of leisure, who, instead of allowing his taste to run to comic opera singers, fast horses, and kindred subjects, had early in life become a student of all that was best in the past history of the world; in fact, a mild, entertaining and lovable antiquarian; latterly he had become much absorbed and interested in Egyptian history and art, so that it was in no way surprising that the notice in his morning paper interested him greatly.

“By George!” he said aloud, “I’ll just run down to Jacobs’ to see if those scarabs have arrived, and then I’ll take a run over to the Art Museum to see the alluring Cleopatra. I will be among the first of her modern adorers to call and pay my *devoir*. It’s a charming morning for a good brisk walk.”

An hour later Mr. Anthony was wending his way down Beacon Street to the little bric-à-brac shop kept by the genial Mr. Jacobs. Having settled his business there satisfactorily, he retraced his steps and proceeded towards the famous Copley Square and the Art Museum. The morning air was delightful and invigorating, and Anthony, in the prime of healthy manhood, drank in large draughts of it and enjoyed his walk as only a perfectly normal, healthy, wealthy, carefree man could.

As he approached one of the stateliest of the many fine residences upon Beacon Street, the door was suddenly thrown open and a lady descended the steps and entered a coupé waiting for her.

Anthony had approached very near to the lady as she reached the sidewalk, and his keen and cultivated eye noted each minute detail of

her face and attire. To his eyes she seemed neither young or old, but a perfect specimen of mature womanhood. She was very beautiful, but entirely unlike the type of woman affected by the morbid taste of the present day. She was not lank and bony and taller than the average man; not at all; she was the antithesis of all this; for she was little over five feet tall, plump and round as a cherub, with medium coloring, neither very dark nor fair, but glowing with health.

Her hair was wonderful; a warm dark brown in color, and breaking all around her brow in waves and curls, which required no crimping irons to make them beautiful. Her eyes were large, expressive, deep blue in color, and fringed with heavy, dark lashes. When she looked at one, it was with the open-eyed, innocent look of a child. Her mouth was delicately formed, with the least suggestion of a Clytie-like droop at the corners, while the dainty chin was round, deeply dimpled and womanly.

She was dressed in exquisite taste; her plain morning costume was a beautiful shade of brown, the color of a faded leaf—perhaps a little deeper in tint, like chestnuts in October.

She wore a very small bonnet of brown velvet, with tiny, upstanding plumes of brown, relieved by one of turquoise blue. Around her neck was a collar of sealskin.

“What a poem of a woman!” thought Anthony as he strode along; “she might be Cleopatra herself. I wonder who she can be? I see she is staying at the Patricks’. I’ll find out as I’m a sinner.”

He walked hurriedly along, musing, as he went his way, of the vision which had just crossed his path.

Finally he found himself at the portals of the Art Museum. He entered and proceeded to the great exhibition hall where the Cleopatra was hung. Already a crowd of people were standing before the canvas, criticising and chatting, after the manner of modern society, which is, perhaps, but a repetition of the old.

“How d’ye do, Anthony?” said a languid youth with a monocle in his eye, and a chrysanthemum in his buttonhole almost large enough for a duster. “Delightful girl, isn’t she? but too short, and not a bit Egyptian.”

Anthony brought all his antique lore to bear upon the monocle and chrysanthemum combi-

nation, explaining as he edged his way nearer the painting that Cleopatra was a short woman, as was proven by her mummy in the British Museum, which measured only five feet; and that she was not an Egyptian but a Greek woman.

“By Jove! you don’t say so, Mark? But of course you know. You’ve been dabbling in that sort of thing for years, old boy. Never could seem to do anything in that line myself, you know; but I’m deuced glad to know the truth. I say, Anthony, the Marc Antony might have been painted from yourself. Put you in those Roman togs, and there you are, ‘the noblest Roman of them all.’ But I must get away. I promised my tailor to call this morning.”

Anthony courteously bowed to the youth and turned to gaze his fill at the picture. He looked earnestly at it, then started back amazed.

“Good Heavens!” he muttered, “it is she, that beautiful woman I saw this morning on Beacon Street!”

Yes, there she reclined in the diaphanous robes of sunny Egypt. The same brown tresses gathered up under the royal uræus; the same in-

nocent, trustful blue eyes gazing lovingly into the face of Marc Antony. One plump white hand held a pink lotus flower, and upon that hand Anthony noticed a peculiar ring, painted with marvellous fidelity to truth. The bezel or top of the ring consisted of an Egyptian scarabæus, cut from a solid piece of turquoise; the setting, which was of deep yellow gold, ended at each side of the scarab with a carved lotus flower. It was an odd and beautiful ring, and thoroughly Egyptian in character.

From the white hand his gaze wandered to the Marc Antony of the picture.

“By George! I think that idiot Gerard was right. It does look like myself as I see my own phiz in the glass every day. I hope to goodness,” he thought, “that none of these noodles will notice it. What a rich morsel they would make of it at the club! In conjunction with my confounded name, too! I never could see what the dear old Pater insisted on naming me Mark for. I suppose he thought that was the proper thing to go with Anthony, having the Roman precedent.”

Anthony continued to gaze at the picture, studying carefully every line and detail; then,

feeling slightly fatigued, he bethought him of the settees behind him, placed there for the convenience of visitors. He turned to find an unoccupied seat and found himself face to face with the lovely vision of the morning—the living embodiment of the antique Cleopatra.

His face took on a look of amazement, and her own seemed no whit less disturbed.

She looked in astonishment from the man to the picture, and back again to the man.

“Oh, Lord!” he thought, “she has seen it, too; and here comes Paul Derby and he’ll give me my deathblow by shouting my confounded name in stentorian tones. His lung power is equal to Victor Maurel’s.”

“Hello, old boy!” shouted Derby, “glad to meet *you* here. You are such an authority, you know, upon the serpent of the Nile. Ah! how d’ye do, Mrs. Patrick?”

Then seeing the lady and his friend were strangers, he said: “Allow me to present my dear friend, Mr. Mark Anthony. I wonder you have never met, as you are neighbors. No, I don’t either, for Anthony is everlastingly flying off to the other end of the world.”

Anthony murmured the usual polite nothings required by the existing occasion.

"I have only recently arrived home from Egypt," he explained; "Mrs. Patrick probably took up her residence here in Boston during my absence. That explains our not having met before; at least," he added, reflectively, and gazing upon the Cleopatra, "not in Boston, nor," he added, with a smile, "in this century."

"Oh, come now!" cried Derby, "don't give us any of your confounded re-incarnation business. I am not going to stand it. If you don't keep away from Egypt, you'll find your body nicely wrapped up in spices in a mummy case, and your soul will go travelling on, like John Brown's, in search of it, in vain."

"I will be magnanimous," laughed Anthony; "henceforth you are spared re-incarnation."

Derby turned and began studying the picture before him; suddenly he started and exclaimed: "Upon my word, you might have posed for the Cleopatra yourself, Mrs. Patrick. Don't you see the resemblance, Mark?"

"Indeed I do," answered Mark.

Mrs. Patrick looked quickly up. "I cannot answer for the Cleopatra," she said, "but I do

see a wonderful resemblance between your friend and the Roman Antony."

"By Jove! yes," said Derby, "what a strange coincidence! Here we have Antony and Cleopatra in the antique and a modern living replica. Delightful!"

Mrs. Patrick gazed dreamily at the picture, her eyes wandered over its details until they rested upon the small white hand wearing the Egyptian ring. Suddenly she became excited.

"See," she exclaimed, "that ring!" and hastily pulling off her glove, she showed to the astonished men the exact counterpart of the painted ring upon her own hand.

"It is true, then," she cried; "I never believed it before. This *was* Cleopatra's ring. I always doubted the story told about it."

"What is the story, Mrs. Patrick?" asked Derby. "Cannot you tell it to us? Here are Anthony and myself just dying of curiosity."

"Yes," she said, "I will tell you about it. It was this way: A few years ago my harum-scarum cousin, Max Stuart, went abroad, and after many months of Continental travel, found himself in Egypt. Having many influential friends, he was invited to be present at the

official opening of a newly-discovered tomb, which promised to be of more than usual importance. That was just the sort of adventure Cousin Max liked; so he was on hand, you may be sure. Among the principal 'finds' that day was an unusually rich and elegant mummy case, which contained the body of a woman of great consequence, as the jewels and idols buried with the body testified. Cousin Max declared this ring which I wear dropped, unnoticed by the others, from the body during the unwrapping; and he, wishing to retain a souvenir of the occasion picked it up and placed it in his pocket.

"But the strangest thing of all this is the sequel: In the mummy case was found a well-preserved papyrus, which, upon being deciphered by experts, conveyed the information that the mummy case contained the embalmed body of Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt; that mummy is now in the British Museum, London."

Anthony and Derby examined both rings minutely—the pictured ring upon the hand of the Queen, and the real and tangible ring upon the hand of the living woman.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Anthony.

"You must beg your Cousin Max's pardon in dust and ashes," said Derby; "just think what a treasure he gave to you, and how very ungrateful, not to say uncousinly, you have been."

Cleo Patrick laughed.

"Max is a great wag, Mr. Derby, fond of playing practical jokes. I suspected he was trying to palm off a modern ring for the genuine antique, or something of that nature, knowing my fondness for old and odd things. I always make due allowance for all Max says or does."

They continued talking upon all sorts of topics. Had she been to the Opera? the Symphony Concerts? Had she seen Calvé in "Carmen"? Time flew by, and finally the lady declared she must really go. The gentlemen both escorted her to the carriage, and with uncovered heads bade her "Adieu."

Anthony quickly turned to his friend. "*Who* is she? Tell me all about her."

"What! old man, are you hit after all these years?" exclaimed Derby, laughing. "Well, she *is* a sweet, womanly woman, a rare thing to find nowadays. Her name was Cleo

Vaughn; she was a New York girl and married old Sam Patrick's son, Ned, several years ago. I think it must have been that winter you went to Rome, as you do not seem to know anything about it. I cannot see how you manage to keep track of any of your friends, for you are always roaming off somewhere to some heathenish place. Anyway, Cleo came from a nice family; is highly accomplished, I tell you; plays the piano like Aus der Ohe, paints well, has read about everything written, I verily believe; seen all the best operas, plays, and whatever is worth seeing; visits all the Art exhibitions. In fact, 'to know her, is a liberal education,' to change Congreve a little; and to crown all, she is modest and very sensible. Did you notice she had something on?"

"Yes," answered Mark, "I did notice that singular fact."

"Oh, you know what I mean; wrap, garment, or whatever you call them. She's about the only woman in Boston to-day who doesn't go sailing off down-town 'in her figger' as the old lady said. She looked nice and comfortable. I do love to see a woman in nice furs. Have you noticed how the girls in Boston

'dress? or rather *undress* lately? They wear July clothes in December and their lips are blue and their noses red."

"Delightful combination," said Mark.

"Yes," continued Derby, "and their teeth chatter like a baby's rattle. I'm sick of them all; silly things! Just see how the Russians dress for cold weather. Great, loose, fur-lined coats, big, fur-lined boots and gloves like a prize-fighter's. They know how to take comfort even in winter weather. Think of it! I heard my sister tell her dear friend, the other day, that she wore silk or lisle-thread hose all winter, and made very little difference in her clothing summer or winter. I felt like shaking a little sense into her. Talk about Russia; we have weather here in Boston which would discount Russia any day."

"See here, Derby," said Mark, impatiently, "I thought you were telling me about Mrs. Patrick? You're a nice fellow to ask information of. I ask about Mrs. Patrick, and you give me an offhand lecture on winter clothing. Now tell me, where's her husband?"

"What, Ned? Oh, he's dead; he was a dreadful fellow, a drinking, gambling, care-for-

naught; spent all her money and nearly broke her heart, but he managed to kill himself, and a good job, too; died respectably in his bed. Very kind of him, I'm sure."

"Any children?" said Mark.

"Two; a boy and a girl. Splendid children. And she's the most devoted and charming mother in the world. It is positively beautiful to see them together."

"Does she reside permanently at the Patricks'?" asked Mark.

"Yes, indeed. The old folks adore her and the children. She is all they have now, and they do their best to spoil her, if that were possible. But I say, Mark, I'm a little hit myself. I cannot have you coming upon the field and ruining my chances."

Mark laughed and thanked his friend for the information so willingly given; and pleading a business engagement, the friends parted at the entrance to the Art Museum.

CHAPTER II.

“Earth’s noblest thing, a woman perfected.”

—J. R. LOWELL.

MARK ANTHONY met Mrs. Patrick frequently during the winter. His friends remarked upon the change in his habits. Formerly almost a recluse, he suddenly developed a taste for afternoon teas and receptions, rather unexpected in an antiquarian. He seemed to be ubiquitous.

Cleo was present at many of these functions, and even the most obtuse of his friends could hardly fail to observe his admiration for the beautiful widow. She had invited him to call in her kindest manner, and he had responded with alacrity. In fact, during the last two months they had become warm friends. She sincerely liked the kindly, serious and respectful gentleman, so dignified and scholarly, and so entirely unlike the average society man. They enjoyed long, delightful conversations upon all sorts of subjects, and their admiration and es-

teem for each other strengthened with their acquaintance.

They had talked long and earnestly one afternoon in January, and finally the conversation drifted to a grand reception to be given the following night by a mutual friend.

"You will go, of course?" he said.

"I suppose so," answered Cleo; "I wish I could avoid going, really. I like the Thayers immensely, but I do not care for that sort of thing; it is quite a trial for me. I must be growing old," she added, with a smile, "but Mrs. Thayer insisted so upon my coming, I could not refuse."

"May I send you some flowers? What color shall I send? I do not want to get anything that will spoil your toilette."

"Thank you; you are most kind. I will wear your flowers with pleasure. I should prefer something pink."

"It really ought to be the lotus," he said. "Cleopatra ought never to wear any other flower, but I am afraid that is impossible in Boston in January. What a shame we are not in Egypt! Do you know," he exclaimed suddenly, "it always seems to me that you *are*

Cleopatra. I do not mean the old Cleopatra with all her naughtiness, but a re-incarnation of her spirit, purified by suffering and death, come back to earth to redeem her past. Do you believe in metempsychosis? Sometimes," he continued, gazing intently upon her, "it seems to me that you and I have been together ages ago, in that wondrous old Egypt I love so well. Who knows!—perhaps you were Cleopatra and I, Marc Antony."

Mrs. Patrick gave him a happy, smiling glance. "Now you are wading fathoms deep in the occult," she said. "You are too learned for me. I believe, if we knew the truth, that you are a Buddhist, or, in plain, every-day Bostonese, a Theosophist. Well, it is a fascinating study. Your words remind me of some lines in 'The Light of Asia' I was reading just before you came in. Ah! here it is."

She picked up the book and hastily began turning the leaves. "Here it is now:"

"We were not strangers, as to us, and all it seemed,

.

Thus I was he, and she, Yasôdhara;
And while the wheel of birth and death turns round,
That which hath been, must be between us two."

She stopped suddenly and blushed a rosy red, as the full import of the words flashed through her mind.

“Yes, that is it,” he cried excitedly. “I do believe that two souls once united by genuine love and affection can *never* be eternally separated or kept apart. Sooner or later, they will gravitate together. It is ‘Kismet,’” he said earnestly. “No, not death, nor marriage, nor time, nor distance, can keep those souls apart. Romanist, Protestant, Buddhist, what does it matter? The highest type of love between man and woman is all there is of Heaven on earth to-day.”

He stopped suddenly, as a servant appeared with a card which she handed to Cleo.

“You have a caller and I must go,” he said. “It is near dinner-time and Auntie Hoyt, my dear old housekeeper, will fret if I’m late.”

“Ah! good-afternoon, Mrs. Thayer,” he exclaimed as that lady appeared in the doorway. “I am just taking my leave, and you will have the field all to yourself. I suppose everything is perfected for to-morrow night, mansion, gown, and feast,—or ought I to have put the gown first?” he asked, mischievously. “What

an everlasting amount of work, trouble, and expense to amuse your friends for an hour or two!"

"You'll be sure to come, Mark?" said Mrs. Thayer, who had been his mother's friend.

"Oh, yes! you may count on me. You know I always come to *you*, Mrs. Thayer. And now I must run home to Auntie Hoyt and so escape a scolding." And with a courtly bow he left the room.

Mark Anthony's head was in a whirl when he left the Patrick mansion. He realized now how devotedly he loved Cleo Patrick. It had come to him like a revelation during their last conversation. "I believe," he mused to himself, "I should have blurted it all out had it not been for Mrs. Thayer's coming."

He returned home like one in a dream. He did not perceive the friends who nodded to him; he was surprised upon taking off his overcoat to find traces of fine snow upon it; he had not noticed it was snowing. He made a desperate effort to pull himself together, and appear like a rational being during his lonely meal, lest the keen eyes of "Auntie Hoyt," who always

waited upon him herself, should discern his excited condition.

After dinner, he drew a large armchair directly in front of the open grate fire, and tried to compose himself by reading; he took a book at random from the table, and mechanically opening it, began to read. It was a volume of poems by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. His eye rested upon the open page, and this is what he read:

“I have been here before,
But when or how, I cannot tell;
I know the grass beyond the door,
The keen, sweet smell,
The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.

“You have been mine before,
How long ago I may not know;
But, just when at that swallow’s soar
Your neck turned so,
Some veil did fall—I knew it all of yore.”

The book dropped from his hand with a bang, but he heeded not. His thoughts were busy with the woman he loved. “If only she loves me,” he sighed, “she shall be my honored wife, and I will, by my devotion, try to make her forget that miserable, unhappy past. Shall I wait, or shall I tell her soon? It is not long

since we met, I know ; that is—this time—but you are right, Rossetti, ‘ she has been mine before.’ I *know* it ; and I *must* tell her soon. Already we have lost too much time. Life is so short ; Eternity so long. We will go together to mystic Egypt. Together we will roam among its strange monuments and ruins. Yes,” he exclaimed, “ in Egypt we will be again Antony and Cleopatra.”

CHAPTER III.

"The woman that now met, unshrinking, his gaze,
Seemed to bask in the silent but sumptuous haze
Of that soft second summer, more ripe than the first,
Which returns when the bud to the blossom hath burst
In despite of the stormiest April."

—OWEN MEREDITH, "Lucile."

"Be my wife, my guide, my good angel, my all upon earth."
—"Lucile."

THE day of the great Thayer reception arrived. Cleo had already received her gown from the modiste—a beautiful costume of faded old rose crêpe, exquisite in tint and texture. Late in the afternoon a box arrived from the florist's. She opened it, and uttering a cry of delight, lifted a mass of lovely pink water-lilies from their bed of soft, white cotton.

Mark's card and a note lay on top of the flowers. Cleo opened the note and read:

"DEAR MRS. PATRICK:

"The lotus is, alas! impossible to achieve here in Boston at such short notice, but I have found

its near relative, and in the color you desired. Cannot you, like Dickens' 'Little Marchioness,' *make believe* very much, and so Cleopatra may wear the lotus to-night? Anticipating the pleasure of meeting you at the reception this evening, I am, my dear Mrs. Patrick,

“Faithfully Yours,

“ANTHONY.”

“How delightful and appropriate,” she thought. She rang the bell, and as Elise appeared, ordered her to carefully place the flowers in water and put them in a cool place until she required them.

It was rather late when Cleo entered Mrs. Thayer's drawing-room that night. She looked like a picture descended from the canvas. For years she had not had so light a heart. As she entered the orchestra was playing the Intermezzo from “*Sylvia*.” She greeted those who crowded around her and seemed in excellent spirits. She enjoyed the exquisite music, the superb floral decorations of the room, and the society of her friends, many of whom were present.

“How foolish I am,” she thought, “that I

do not enjoy more of this beautiful life; and it is all my own fault, for I am invited everywhere."

She looked around among the happy throng, missing one face, the one she most desired to see. She looked and waited, and finally seeking out a quiet spot, sat down alone.

There Mark found her a quarter of an hour later, after searching through the rooms in vain.

"My dear Mrs. Patrick!" he exclaimed, "have you renounced 'the pomps and vanities of this wicked world' and turned nun?"

"No, indeed," said Cleo, laughing, "but someday I soon tire of it all. It wearies me, and it is very warm here."

"So it is," said Mark, "awfully warm. We might go into the conservatory; it is delightfully cool there. I have just left it."

He escorted her to the conservatory, and finding a cosy seat beside an Ionic column of white marble, turned to go.

"I am going to send some one for your wrap," he said. "It is almost too cool here for you. I will return immediately."

She found herself alone amidst the statues

and the flowers, thinking of this man who was so kind to and thoughtful of her, and who, she was afraid, occupied too large a share of her thoughts.

Mark soon returned with her wrap and placed it carefully around her shoulders. Then he sat down nearby, and they fell into conversation. He told her of his lonely, wandering life.

“I have a fine home,” he said, “but no home life compared to other men who have a wife and children. It is my own fault, I dare say; ‘man has delighted me not, no, nor woman either,’ until,”—he hesitated and faltered; and then he added in a low voice, “until I saw *you*. Since then I have had but one thought, that one day you might care enough for me to become my wife.”

Cleo looked startled.

“I know it is very soon, dear, and that you are quite unprepared for this, but I feel that I must *speak*; for I knew the first time I ever saw you, that you were the only woman in the world for me. I have been waiting for you, dear. Tell me, Cleo, am I too abrupt?—am I

too presumptuous?—or do you, too, care for me a little?”

In a flash it came to her, how much she cared for this man who freely offered her everything the world most highly prizes—love, wealth, protection. Why should she hesitate?

“Cleo,” he said at last, “I am waiting for my answer. Will you be my loved and honored wife?”

She slowly raised her eyes to his. “My children!” she faltered—“you forget my children. I cannot leave them.”

“Oh, Cleo! is it possible you think so poorly of me? Part you from your children! Never, my darling. Your children shall be mine. Your beautiful motherhood is one of your greatest attractions to me. I respect and admire you for your care of, and devotion to, your children. Would there were more such mothers. There is no obstacle,” he cried. “Cleo! won’t you answer? Will you be my wife?”

She put out her hands to him, and answered simply, “Yes.”

“God bless you, my darling,” he cried. “And may He deal with me as I do with you.”

Mark came very frequently to the house after their engagement, bringing Cleo such pretty offerings as a well-bred man may with propriety give to the woman he loves: choice books, fine photographs, exquisite flowers, and dainty bon-bons he heaped upon her with a lavish hand. He gave her but one jewel, her engagement ring, feeling rightly, that when she was his wife he could more appropriately give her costly jewels.

Mark showed his original taste in his selection of an engagement ring. "I will not give her one of those cold glittering, great diamond solitaires," he mused. "Horrid things! I detest them."

Having ascertained that Cleo was born in the month of May, he determined to give her the stone sacred to her birth month, an emerald. So he searched through all the wares of the dealers in precious stones, until he found a large and flawless emerald, fit for a duchess. This he ordered to be surrounded with the finest Persian turquoises for "luck," and to be placed in a unique setting of purest gold. It was a daring and strange combination of color, but the ring, when finished, exceeded in beauty and

oddity even Mark's most sanguine expectations. He next ordered a box to be made for it of pure white ivory, lined with ivory-white velvet, and carved upon the top with Cleo's monogram in cipher. The whole was enclosed in a bag of rich turquoise blue brocade.

CHAPTER IV.

“At every word, a reputation dies.”

—A. POPE.

Is there a more beautiful and luxurious place upon the civilized earth than the boudoir of a wealthy and tasteful woman of society? One afternoon in January several society belles sat at afternoon tea, gossiping, laughing, and enjoying themselves principally by dissecting the characters of their best friends, criticising their manners, style, and looks, and leaving the absent unfortunates not a vestige of anything, material or otherwise, to bless themselves with.

This boudoir was a bower of luxury and magnificence, fitted to suit the taste and whims of a woman of vast wealth, who denied herself absolutely nothing that money or influence could procure. The hangings of the walls, as well as the window draperies and several cushions, were of rose-colored moiré antique silk; the window draperies and cushions were also covered by delicate filmy lace. The divan and

chair frames were heavily gilt, and upholstered with exquisite tapestry, in Watteau scenes, of the loveliest old tints. The ceiling overhead was a dream of loveliness by Torjetti: Cupids and flowers and beautiful women floating upon sun-tinted clouds. The carpet was of rose-colored velvet, relieved here and there by rugs of pure white fur. A magnificently carved and gilded harp stood in one corner of the room. Upon the walls hung several fine copies of famous paintings of beautiful women: Madame Pompadour, by Greuze; Madame Récamier, by Gerard; the Duchess of Devonshire, by Gainsborough, and others. Graceful palms and stately rubber-trees were placed in appropriate places, and a large, crystal, trumpet-shaped vase upon an onyx table contained a large bouquet of Mermet roses.

The room reflected much of the taste and character of its owner; she, Vivian Sinclair, herself, was half reclining upon a divan, sipping tea, talking little, and listening to the conversation of her friends. She was listening now to an account of a reception given by a mutual friend. The speaker was Agnes Hastings, a tall, stylish girl with fluffy, blond hair, who

was acknowledged by all her friends to be the most original and daring of their set. When once started upon a favorite subject nothing daunted her, and friends and foes were alike fearful of what the result might be, for she seldom weighed her words. Very daring, audacious, and the leader of social frivolity, from her early youth, she had been a power unto herself.

"Awfully sorry you could not go to the Thayer reception, Vivian. Shame you were ill. Every one was there but you. Florence Conant, in lavender (half mourning, you know), flirting with old Moneybags; I mean old Parker; showed her hand, I tell you."

"Well," responded Miss Sinclair, "Florence is a handsome woman and quite fascinating, too, for a while, but she doesn't wear well; one sees through her flatteries."

"Yes," said another, "Florence seems very sweet at first. She will get him if she only strikes while the iron is hot—before he sees through her wiles."

"Kitty Adams was there too," continued Miss Hastings, "in her usual made-over gown, trimmed with forget-me-nots, awfully touching and good. She was doing the missionary act,

watching the boys to see that they did not indulge in too much frappé, and lecturing them upon the iniquity of cigarette smoking. I saw 'Jack' Graham go behind the door and make up a face at her. By the way, that reminds me, I think I'll indulge now," and suiting the action to the word, she plunged her hand into a little pocket in her tailor-made coat and brought forth her cigarette case—a dainty affair of silver, with her cipher set in turquoises, and also a tiny match-box of the same material. Selecting a cigarette, she coolly proceeded to light and enjoy the same.

"Beastly habit," she continued; "don't you think so? Always nagging the poor boys."

Vivian looked up and smiled. "Don't worry about the poor boys, dear. I am sure they do not suffer very keenly."

"No, I suppose they don't," said Agnes. "But where was I? Oh! Cleo Patrick was there. She looked like a dream, as usual; beside her the other women looked like nightmares. She wore one of those odd dresses she is so fond of,—a sort of glorified 'Mother Hubbard' as it were,—made of a faded shade of rose-color crêpe; entirely knife-pleated from

neck to floor and trimmed with bands of quaint, jewelled embroidery in a sort of Egyptian design; lotus and all that. She did not wear a single jewel, excepting a turquoise serpent with diamond eyes and tongue, wound around her arm, and that everlasting Egyptian ring she always wears upon her hand. She looked like Cleopatra come to life. How fond she is of everything Egyptian! She is about as bad as that crank, Mark Anthony. By the way, he was at Thayers', and very attentive to Cleopatra, too. Cleo carried the queerest bouquet you ever saw; just pink water-lilies tied together with a pink satin ribbon."

At the mention of Mark Anthony's name Vivian Sinclair started visibly, but her friends were so absorbed in the details of Cleopatra's costume that her movement was unnoticed.

"Yes! Mark was devoted to Cleo; hung around her all the evening. Isn't it wonderful? I wonder if he takes her for a re-incarnated mummy? I never knew him to look twice at a woman before. I came upon them, and they were talking about that mysterious ring she wears. She told him she was convinced it had once belonged to the famous Cleo-

patra of history. Fancy that, if you please. She said that she had dreamed that the woman who wore that ring would always possess the devotion of the man she loved."

None of the others saw the look of hatred and malice which came into the face of the fair hostess.

"That ring!" she thought to herself. "I *must*, I *will* have it."

"Cleo is a queer dresser, isn't she?" queried a blooming young bride in very correct "tailor-made" costume. "I don't see why she cannot dress like the rest of us. Those loose 'Mother Hubbard' rigs are all well enough on the stage; we expect such costumes from actresses. And just look at her hair, curled and frousled until it looks like a snarl of embroidery silk; and she never changes it; summer or winter, it is always the same. Fashions come and fashions go, but her head is unchanged."

"That's the very thing I admire most in her," answered Agnes. "She has not only good taste, but character. She knows just what suits her own style, and she has sense and independence enough to wear it. You see she is quite short."

"I should say so, indeed!" said Vivian (who was unusually tall). "Horrid little frump!—she isn't an inch over five feet one or two; and she's as broad as she is long. I cannot see what there is to admire in her."

Agnes gave Vivian a keen look, but said nothing to her in reply. However, she again broke forth in defence of her favorite.

"I think her figure lovely," she said; "such a neck!—such arms, delightfully plump!—and she is artist enough to know that those long, flowing lines are the thing for her to wear. As for 'Mother Hubbards,' as you call them, I wish I could see every one of you in a 'Mother Hubbard' this minute, instead of those nasty, vulgar, tight and uncomfortable tailor-made gowns. Why! most of you have to use a button-hook to bring your bodices together; you bulge out here and nip in there, and show your figure, or what you call your figure (which is all false) in the most immodest way, and as the prayer-book says, 'there is no good in you.'"

"Oh, come now, Agnes," spoke up Vivian. "Please do not give us a lecture upon artistic dressing, *à la* Cleo Patrick."

"Let her alone," said the bride, Mrs. Alfred

Anderson. "Agnes has convictions. She is convinced that we are all idiots. There is one god, or rather goddess, beside Allah, and that is Cleo Patrick; and 'Mother Hubbards' are her heavenly robes."

"You may fire your sarcasm at me all you wish to," said Agnes, "what do I care? And you may ridicule 'Mother Hubbard' gowns all you please, but you none of you appreciate the possibilities of that much maligned garment. How inconsistent you are! You rave over Greek and Eastern draperies and turn your backs in scorn upon their nearest relative. Certainly, that horrid name is against it, and I admit I have seen some agonizing specimens hanging out at the shops. 'Your choice for forty-nine cents,' you know; but such a dress as Cleo wore to the Thayers' the other night is positively Greek in its classicism. It is a robe fit for the gods. As for Cleo's form, you girls have an idea that no woman is fit to wear clothes but one tall enough for an electric light pole. I hate them! Look at *me*. I'm called stylish, and willowy, and all that. I'm nothing but a horrid fraud, with padded arms, padded hips, and my bones almost rat-

ting. And I've got hollows in my scrawny neck. Deep enough for coin purses. Oh, Lord! what would I not give for Cleo Patrick's form!"

"Well, you're frank enough about it, anyway, my dear. There's no danger of our mistaking you for the Venus de Medici after this."

"Frank! Of course I am. Because I know you are all just like me, my dears. We are a set of animated clothes-poles. But, bless me, my cigarette is out." And she proceeded to relight it.

"You make me think of the wonderful wife in Marie Corelli's story. She offered her cigarette case to her newly-wedded lord almost before they had started on their wedding journey. I believe you would be audacious enough to do that same thing, Agnes!"

"And why not, pray?" asked Agnes. "I suppose you believe with the rest of the world, that all the doubtful habits should be monopolized by man. A man may go to the bottomless pit of vileness, but when he has 'sowed his wild oats' and deigns to select a victim for matrimonial honors, *she* must be all that is pure, innocent, and virginal; while he has been

amusing himself degrading other men's wives and daughters, she has lived the life of a vestal. Because, forsooth, he could put up with nothing less. I don't go around shouting for woman's rights; you know that. But I *do* believe that in the sight of God, what is right in a man is right in a woman. Men and women are equal in the sight of our Maker. No, thank you, I don't want a husband. When I put on my hat, I want it to cover my whole family."

"Nonsense, Agnes, how you do run on. We shall probably hear of your engagement before Easter."

"I shall *never* marry," said Agnes, solemnly.

After Agnes's answer a chill seemed to settle upon the party, and one by one they took their departure, until finally the beautiful and envied Vivian found herself entirely alone. Restlessly she paced the floor, inwardly raging, and in every way miserable.

"He loves her!" she cried. "Oh! that I could doubt it, but it is too true. I have seen his love for her grow like a beautiful flower; and I!—I love him so, and he hardly deigns to notice my presence. What is all this hateful luxury and wealth to me, since he will not share

it with me? Oh, for a charm to lure him to my side! That ring!" she almost shouted; "that will bring him to me. That mysterious ring! I must, I will have it."

"Did Mademoiselle ring?" And a coquetish head was thrust inside the door.

"No! er—yes; I did," hesitatingly answered her mistress. "Ah! Fanchette, how well you are looking to-day!"

The little French maid smiled in the most delighted manner.

"And are you to attend the French ball? Yes, of course, you are."

"Since Mademoiselle is so kind," answered Fanchette. "I have been anxious lest my costume might not compare——"

"Oh, we can arrange that," said her mistress. "I think I must give you my blue silk, with the chiffon, and those pretty blue hose with the silver clocks. That will make you quite charming."

"Mademoiselle is too kind!" cried the delighted Fanchette.

"No, indeed, Fanchette. You have been a most obliging creature to me, and I always re-

member a kindness, my dear girl. I never forget a debt," she added impressively.

"By the way, Fanchette, you were asking me if you might go over and spend a night with Mrs. Patrick's maid, Elise. I think I can spare you to-night. I suppose you and she are fathoms deep in your ball costumes? Fanchette, did you ever notice that queer ring with a turquoise centre that Mrs. Patrick wears?"

"Indeed I have, Mademoiselle. One could not help to see it, it is so very odd; and she seems to prize it so. She seldom wears but that one, although one day, while going through her room with Elise, I noticed the ring stand was full of lovely rings. I spoke of it to Elise, and she said, 'Madame *never* took that ring off from her hand excepting when she went to bed.' "

Vivian listened eagerly to every word.

"If only one could have that ring," she musingly said, as if to herself. "My heart is set upon possessing that ring,—or," she corrected herself, "one like it. I would pay a glorious price for such a ring."

Fanchette started and glanced inquiringly at her mistress.

“Indeed I would,” she said in answer to the look. “A glorious price! And, you know, I always pay my debts,” she added, slowly and impressively. “That is all, dear. You can go.”

CHAPTER V.

“A little of that large discourse I know, which Buddha spoke.”

—“The Light of Asia.”

“These words the Master spake of duties due
To Father, Mother, Children, fellows, friends.”

—“The Light of Asia.”

THE same bright day in January which witnessed the meeting of the “smart” young ladies in Vivian Sinclair’s boudoir, another and a different sort of meeting took place in one of the most exclusive mansions on Beacon Street.

The chatelaine of this modern palace was known familiarly by her intimate friends as Mrs. “Ted,” otherwise, Mrs. Theodore Palmer.

On the afternoon in question, a large party of thinking men and women met in Mrs. “Ted’s” magnificent drawing-room. This meeting, like nearly everything presented by that lady, was to be unique. For Mrs. “Ted” was not only very wealthy, but intellectual, daring and, above all, original, and last but

not least, generous and kind in heart. Thoroughly misunderstood and heartily abused, she went her way serenely, happy in the knowledge that she was much better than her envious accusers.

On this occasion, Mrs. "Ted" was to introduce the wonderful Theosophist priest, Mohundra Ardatha, to a select circle of Boston *élite*.

The weird philosopher created a most profound impression as he strode into the room. He was more than six feet in height, rather spare of flesh, with large, mild, expressive eyes and a face of most extraordinary beauty. His attire attracted no little attention, as he wore the picturesque dress of an Eastern land. It was composed of shades of dull Indian red and a soft, beautiful brown, with a mantle of mustard yellow. Upon his head he wore a turban of thin ivory-white material, disposed in graceful folds.

He began his discourse, slowly and impressively, in a low, musical voice, used most perfect English, and held his intelligent audience spell-bound for more than an hour.

Among the many guests assembled were

Mark Anthony and Cleo Patrick; the former strangely moved by the words of the Buddhist priest. When Mohundra touched upon the re-incarnation of the soul, which was a favorite topic with Mark, he looked earnestly at Cleo as if to read her very thoughts.

The lecture ended. The audience slowly wended their way, in groups of twos and threes, toward the door.

Suddenly the deep tones of the priest were heard above the murmur of the departing throng.

"There is one here," he said, "to whom I bear a message. Will the lady who wears the Egyptian ring be pleased to wait a little after the others, that I may speak with her?"

Cleo turned pale, but said nothing. Mark hurriedly made his way to her side.

"Do not fear," he said, in low tones. "Mohundra is well known to me, a noble, kindly soul, who desires only that which is highest and best in life. I met him in the East, two years ago, and learned to respect and admire him."

"Thank you!" said Cleo, quietly. "I will wait."

She seated herself calmly and waited until all were gone. Mrs. "Ted," seeing that her illustrious guest desired to speak alone with Cleo, invented a charmingly original fib about being needed somewhere else at that particular moment, and excused herself "just for a minute."

At length Cleo and the priest were alone. He advanced deferentially, and, bowing gracefully, said: "Dear lady, you have heard my words this afternoon concerning re-incarnation. It is my belief, my creed. I know it is surely accomplished. Yes! even in yourself. For, ages ago, you were before on earth, in another land, rich in learning, wealth and history. Alas! to-day it is a land of colossal ruins. The Sphynx, the Pyramids, Karnah, Philæ, Memphis; something still remains to show a wondering world how great was Egypt. When these grand monuments were at their best, then, dear lady, *you* were the *one supreme*; beautiful, powerful, but, pardon me, unscrupulous. You paid the tribute which, sooner or later, we all must pay. You died, and by your own fair hand. But in that pitiful death was redemption and purification, and in another and later age you were re-

born. Again you lived and loved and died. During that life a famous artist saw and loved you and made a masterpiece of you as Cleopatra, little knowing it was really she he painted. Again you paid nature's price. Ages went by, and now, to-day, I behold you here, a glorious woman, as beautiful as of yore, but purified, noble. Show me the ring," he said abruptly.

Cleo handed him the ring. He examined it carefully. "Yes," he said. "This is the ring of Cleopatra. And you," he continued, impressively, "were, and are, Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, in other days."

"No, no!" shuddered Cleo. "I cannot bear it; it is too dreadful."

He took no notice of her outcry, but continued: "Him saw I too. Antony, the Roman general! He, too, has passed through the fire and is regenerate. Now mark me well! That ring was hers, your other self. Fate has once again thrown it into your hands. For *you* it bears a potent charm, but for none other. Treasure it, guard it, for it brings you happiness and love. This is the message of the Mahatmas, and also this: Beware the dark-browed,

slender serpent who pretends to be your friend!"

Cleo shudderingly covered her face with her hands. When she dropped them she found herself,—*alone!* ✓

CHAPTER VI.

“Thou smooth-lipped serpent, surely high inspired,
Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise.”

—KEATS, “Lamia.”

FANCHETTE returned the next morning from Mrs. Patrick's in good season, but seeming a trifle nervous and agitated. She greeted her mistress respectfully and delivered several kind messages from Cleo; after which she ascended to her own room to exchange her street gown for her regular house attire.

Vivian had been reading by a sunny window as she entered, but as she left the room, dropped her book, and lifting the lace draperies, looked out upon the wintry landscape. It was wintry, but very beautiful. The sun was shining brightly, adding brilliant lights to the snow-covered roofs and trees. She saw in the distance the gilded dome of the State House, like a great topaz, the fairest jewel in Boston's crown.

“Topaz and sapphire!” she exclaimed, as she saw the dome against the blue background of sky. “It is too lovely.”

She crossed the room, and seating herself at the piano, began to sing Lola’s song from “Cavalleria Rusticana.”

“Pshaw!” she exclaimed, “I cannot sing. I am not in the mood. I am dying with curiosity. Did she take it? Has she got it? Why did she not tell me? I dare not ask her. I must not commit myself, but await developments.”

She left the drawing-room and slowly wended her way up the stairs leading to her own private apartments. She entered her chamber, advanced to a large mirror above the bureau and glanced in.

“Heavens!” she cried, “what a fright I am! I look like one who has seen a spirit. It is this blue ribbon at my neck. I am always hideous in blue. I am too dark for it. I will exchange it for the cream-white which becomes me.”

Suiting the action to the word, she hastily pulled open the upper drawer of the bureau, and there, quietly reposing among her costly laces, she beheld Cleo Patrick’s Egyptian ring. She drew a long breath of relief.

“That girl!” she said. “How clever!”

She took the ring from its dainty bed, and seating herself, she examined it carefully and thoroughly.

“It is lovely,” she said, “and wonderfully odd; and now that I have it safely in my own hands, what *shall* I do with it? I *must* wear it upon my person in order to receive any benefit from its charm. Charm! What nonsense! And yet I cannot help but feel there is a mystery about it. Then, again, no one must ever see it. Cleo will doubtless raise a great commotion when she discovers her loss. Will she suspect Fanchette? No, I feel sure she will not, as the girl has passed many nights at her house with Elise, and has always been very trustworthy. Let me think. Ah! I have it. Yes, that will do nicely; and I shall have it always upon my person.”

She crossed the room, and opening a closet door, she reached up to a high shelf and took therefrom a square box, which, as she opened it, disclosed a quantity of exquisite silk pieces, odds and ends left from her various toiles. She finally selected a small piece of rose-colored silk, of a firm, rich texture. Again crossing the

room, she paused before a table, upon which rested a very dainty and well-appointed lady's work-basket. She took from it her thimble, a spool of rose-colored silk, and scissors; and opening a needle-book, selected a needle. This she threaded with the sewing silk. She next measured the ring and cut a tiny bag of the dress silk to fit it. Then in a business-like manner, she sewed up the seams to the bag very securely. She next placed the ring within the bag and sewed it in carefully.

"Now," she thought, "I want a cord."

She paused a moment, then went again to the closet and brought forth an immense box containing a superb ball costume. "I will take one of the lacing cords to my waist," she said to herself. "I can easily replace it." And she proceeded to cut the rose-tinted cord from the corsage. Then reseating herself, she sewed the cord firmly to each corner of the top of the bag, so as to make a silken chain with the bag as a pendant. She quickly unbuttoned her gown, and, slipping the cord over her head, placed the whole within her dress and rebuttoned it.

Then she sat for several minutes absorbed in

silent thought. At length she seemed to have arrived at some conclusion, for she smiled, and reaching out her hand, touched an electric button. Fanchette appeared in answer to the summons. Not a word or look of Vivian's betrayed that anything unusual had taken place. Fanchette was pale and appeared constrained and nervous.

"Fanchette," said Vivian, pleasantly, "my dear girl, I have just been thinking of you."

"Mademoiselle is too kind," murmured Fanchette.

"No, indeed! Fanchette, you have been very faithful to me and my interests; and I have determined to reward your devotion. You remember telling me not long since how homesick you were for France? Dear old France! And how you longed to see your parents once again? You shall see them, Fanchette. I will make it possible for you. What would you say now to a ticket for France upon a first-class steamer, and a thousand dollars in money to start you in a nice little business when you arrive? A thousand dollars would be quite a little fortune in France, Fanchette."

"She wishes to be rid of me forever,"

thought the girl. "She is afraid I might betray her, but I shall be only too glad to go. I hate myself."

Recovering herself, however, she quickly replied:

"Mademoiselle is an angel of goodness and generosity. I shall never cease to be grateful."

"Well, then," responded Vivian brightly, "we'll consider that settled. How soon would you care to go?"

"The sooner the better," answered Fanchette.

"Very well, then. This is Tuesday. Would you like to sail in the steamer which leaves on Saturday next? Could you be ready? If so, your ticket shall be purchased for you. I dislike much to part with you, Fanchette; but in this case I must not consider my own feelings. You have been a willing, devoted girl to me, and deserve to be rewarded."

So it was all arranged as Vivian had planned, and the following Saturday, Fanchette found herself a passenger upon an outward-bound steamer sailing away to her native land. But it was not the same light-hearted Fanchette who, five years before, had come to America as

maid to Vivian Sinclair, who had come across her in France, and being attracted by her pretty face and pert ways, had engaged her to wait upon her. Notwithstanding the fact that she returned to France a far richer woman than she left it, her heart was heavy. Naturally neither dishonest nor deceitful, only the hope of a very large reward and a desire to please a quite indulgent mistress had impelled her to commit such a sin against Cleo Patrick, whom she sincerely liked and respected. She bitterly regretted her act. But it was too late to retract. She must shield not only herself but her late mistress from the consequences sure to follow, were the truth ever known.

CHAPTER VII.

"But the trail of the serpent is over them all."

—THOMAS MOORE, "Paradise and the Peri."

FANCHETTE had been gone from the Patricks' several hours before Cleo discovered the loss of her ring.

Thinking it might have been swept off her dressing-case by a careless hand, she began to look for it in a leisurely manner. Not finding it as easily as she had at first expected to, she called her two children, and questioned them. Neither had seen the ring off from her hand. Then she summoned Elise, who, of course, knew nothing of it, but together they searched everywhere. The bureau drawers were ransacked and each article taken out, shaken and replaced again within the drawer. Cleo's heart sank. At last Elise spoke.

"Madame," she said, "you know Fanchette was here with me last night. Do you think——" and she hesitated.

“Think what, Elise? That Fanchette has taken my ring? No, I do not. The poor girl has been coming here for the last five years and has always been honest and faithful. I will not wrong her by a suspicion.”

After searching diligently for a couple of hours she at last realized that the fateful ring was really gone. She was almost prostrated. The mysterious happenings of the last three months had given the ring a superstitious value. Not for its beauty and oddity did she prize it wholly now. It seemed to her to hold her fate within its golden circle. Its loss made her gloomy and depressed. So restless was she, that day, that shortly after lunch she determined to go out into the open air to take a walk somewhere to relieve her agitated mind.

Instinctively, her steps took the direction of Vivian Sinclair's home; not that she suspected Fanchette, for her faith in the girl's honesty was unshaken.

Vivian received her cordially and effusively.

“For goodness' sake, Cleo, what has happened?” she asked. “Are you ill? You look as though you had encountered a ghost from the subway or the Granery Burying Ground.”

Cleo faltered; she tried to speak, and the tears came into her eyes.

"You will think me very childish and foolish," she said, "but I have lost my old Egyptian ring, and I am almost heart-broken over it."

"Lost it!" echoed Vivian, in well-feigned surprise. "How? Where?"

"I only wish I knew," sighed Cleo. "All I know is that it has mysteriously disappeared. It was last night, you know; Fanchette was at the house, but, of course," she added hastily, "I do not suspect *her*, poor girl——"

"I should say not, indeed!" said Vivian, quickly. "Fanchette is the very soul of honesty. It would break her heart to know she was suspected of such a deed. My dear Cleo, I sympathize with you deeply in your trouble. Possibly you might have caught the ring among your laces or the trimmings of your dress, and then dropped it in some place unawares. If so, you may come across it again. You don't suppose, do you, that rats or mice ever carry away such little things?"

"No, I think not, although I am unfamiliar with their habits."

And so the conversation drifted on. Cleo tried to assume a cheerful manner while at her friend's, but the effort was too trying to her strained nerves and after a short time she took her leave.

"Thank Heaven!" cried Vivian, as she watched Cleo's departing figure. "*That* is over."

Cleo returned directly to her home. Her heart was too sad. She could not enjoy the beautiful wintry landscape which lay all around her. Boston Common, that pride of every true Bostonian, appeared like a veritable fairy-land; the tall trees covered with light snow and ice seemed like gigantic patterns of delicate lace-work. She did not notice the smiling sun; the sky almost too blue for a winter sky.

She entered her home wearily, and once again ascended to her apartments.

"I am almost ill," she thought; "I will put on a loose gown and try and compose myself. It cannot be helped."

Half an hour afterwards, Mark Anthony was ushered into the library. Cleo, when informed of his presence, went down to receive him. She entered the room, looking like a vision of des-

pair, her loose robe, of some delicate ivory-white, woollen material, only adding to the effect, so simple and severe was it in design. Agnes Hastings would have called it a glorified "Mother Hubbard."

He advanced towards the door when he heard Cleo's footsteps, holding in one hand an immense bouquet of beautiful violets. Mark stopped in surprise as she entered the room.

"Why, my darling!" he exclaimed, "what is the matter with you? How ill you look!"

Her lips quivered, but she made no answer. She tried at last to speak, but dropping her head into her hands, burst into an agony of sobs; her over-charged heart found relief in tears.

Mark was dumfounded and miserable, but he saw that in her present condition those tears were a blessing to her. They seemed to calm her nerves, and as Mark advanced and took her hands in his, she raised her head, her face all suffused with tears, and smiled.

"I feel better now, Mark dear, and I want to tell you all about it. But really, I am afraid you will think me awfully foolish to make so much of what you may consider a trifle."

Then in a simple, straightforward manner she proceeded to make it all clear to him.

Mark listened attentively, his brow clouded. He, unlike Cleo, instantly suspected Fanchette, the maid, of taking the ring, although he could not understand her motive. Fanchette had many pretty rings and trinkets of her own, for she had a generous mistress and excellent wages. And why she should run such a risk of detection, for a ring which she probably did not appreciate, he could not fathom. His keen mind detected something wrong, and he determined to unravel the mystery. He would say nothing of his suspicions to poor, sorrowing Cleo, but silently watch and wait and unravel, if he could, the mysterious disappearance of the ring.

To Cleo he spoke lightly of her loss, trying in every way to lighten her grief. But his own heart was troubled; he thought of the words which Mohundra Ardatha had said to Cleo and which she had repeated to himself: "Beware the dark-browed, slender serpent who pretends to be your friend."

"She is the one," thought Mark. "It is Vivian Sinclair. I *will* find out the truth."

After this Mark seemed to delight more and more in society. He was ubiquitous, here, there, and everywhere, talking, listening, and watching. He called now frequently upon Vivian Sinclair, much to that lady's delight and Cleo's amazement, as hitherto he had never seemed to admire the haughty belle. Vivian's manner to Cleo seemed to undergo a change. She now assumed an air of condescending superiority, and never failed to inform Cleo of all his visits.

Cleo was wounded, and in her heart wondered. Had she, after all, been mistaken in Mark's character? Was he, like the rest of the men she knew, made only of common clay? She had believed him to be superior; a retiring, studious gentleman. But he seemed to be fast developing into a society leader.

His manner to Cleo continued unchanged. His love and devotion seemed unbounded. Nevertheless she experienced feelings of disappointment and regret.

CHAPTER VIII.

“What a goodly outside falsehood hath.”

—SHAKESPEARE.

“To be once in doubt is once to be resolved.”

—SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Anthony heard of the departure of Fanchette, Vivian's maid, for France, he became doubly suspicious of the guilt of the mistress, and he resolved to be more watchful than ever.

Shortly after he received this valuable bit of information, he called at the Sinclair residence. He had not been there many minutes when the new maid appeared and handed a note to Vivian.

Mark thanked his good genius for this opportunity which he had been long wishing for.

“Isn't that a new maid you have?” said he, carelessly, as she left the room.

“Yes, she is a new one, and rather awkward,” replied Vivian.

“Nice little girl, that other one; very pretty

and dainty," said Mark, in a desperate attempt to continue this topic of conversation.

"So she was," answered Vivian. "I picked her up in France, myself, at Sèvres. Her father was a workman in the porcelain factory there. They were very respectable people, and quite well-to-do; it was some time before they could be brought to part with Fanchette, but the girl was crazy to come with me to America, and we finally won the day. Lately, however, she has pined for home, her parents, and France, so I reluctantly allowed her to return. Quite a sacrifice, I assure you, as I doubt if I ever find so satisfactory a maid again."

Mark could hardly suppress his delight at this gratuitous bit of information, which was all he desired. He remained a reasonable time and then politely took his departure. As he regained the street he drew a long breath of relief.

"Now I begin to see my way clear," he thought. "But I must not tell Cleo yet. What a shame to be obliged to deceive her, but it is absolutely necessary to the success of my plans. Cleo has such a beautiful, simple, and transparent nature, she could never conceal her feelings

and thoughts. Now let me see," he mused, "I must concoct a plausible story, so I can get away from America without exciting Vivian's suspicions. I have it!" he suddenly exclaimed. "I will pretend to go out West to investigate the serpent mounds or the Grand Cañon; that will be in keeping with my character."

That evening he called upon Cleo, and, after a little chat upon every-day topics, broached the subject of his departure from Boston for a month or two.

"I can't say for how long, dear; but it will not be many weeks. I must investigate those serpent mounds. They will work into my new book finely. Are you aware that spring is almost here? I will leave orders to have my yacht, the *Cleopatra*, overhauled while I am away, and this summer we will make up a party of congenial friends, and do our best to get Mrs. 'Ted' to matronize us, and we will take a delightful cruise."

"Oh! how lovely that would be," said Cleo, "and Mrs. 'Ted' is always so full of resources, and so brilliant. But I shall miss you dreadfully," she said, with a sorrowful face.

"Try and not mind it, dear," he said. "If

will soon be over. See what I have brought you to take my place while I am gone. I do not wish to be absolutely forgotten," he said, quizzically, handing her a little package as he spoke.

She opened the paper which enwrapped it. A dainty bag of old rose brocade was disclosed, which in turn held an ivory box; the counterpart of the one which had held her engagement ring, only considerably larger. This, too, had her monogram finely carved upon the top. She opened the box and there, reposing upon its white velvet bed, was an exquisite ivory miniature of Mark, himself. It was set within a golden frame, inlaid with pearls, and attached to the ring was a long golden chain to wear it on around her neck.

Cleo uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Miss Kusner painted that," said Mark. "And, Cleo, I want you to have one painted for me while I am gone—one of yourself."

Cleo readily promised, and then slipped the golden chain over her head.

"Oh, Mark!" she said, "how kind you are to me."

Mark returned home, and immediately be-

gan to make preparations for his trip to France; for that was his destination, instead of the West. He had fully determined to hunt up Fanchette; and some way or other to get at the truth. His friends accepted the story of the Western trip in good faith.

“What a fellow Mark is!” said Paul Derby. “I have been expecting this for some time. I never knew Mark to remain in one place so long before. I thought he could not keep quiet much longer. How he does love those old, musty studies of his!”

“Yes,” said another, “everything old, odd, or mysterious appeals to Mark.”

So many of his friends accompanied him to the station and wished him success and a pleasant trip as the train drew away. For he was a great favorite, despite his oddity.

When Mark arrived at the Metropolis he wrote a line to Cleo, telling her of his safe arrival in New York, where he wished to transact some business, previous to his departure for the West. In his letter he told Cleo not to be worried or surprised if she did not hear from him again, as he hardly knew where his wan-

derings might take him, perhaps away from civilization.

Mark made a quick and pleasant trip from New York to Southampton, and without any unnecessary delay crossed the Channel and arrived safely upon French soil.

He made his way directly to the little town of Sèvres, and after a lunch went early to bed, pretty well worn out by his quick travelling. He awoke the next morning refreshed by a sound night's sleep.

After breakfast he made a few cautious inquiries, but did not obtain the information he desired. He put on his hat and coat and started out, traversing all of the principal highways in search of Fanchette. Fortunately, he thought, he knew her surname; it was Flamel.

That first day he was unsuccessful, but he was not discouraged. He again started forth the next day, determined to be more vigilant than ever. As he wandered through the busy portion of the town he came suddenly upon a modest little milliner's shop. He stopped in surprise before the small gilded sign displayed over the door. "Mlle. Fanchette," he read. His heart beat wildly. Could it be? He would

investigate, and turning to the glass panels of the door, he peered in.

Yes, there she stood, Fanchette herself, smiling and talking volubly with a customer. He waited until the customer departed, and then quickly entered the little shop.

Hearing footsteps, Fanchette turned and found herself face to face with Mark Anthony. She knew him at once and her face turned deadly pale, her eyes glaring at him in surprise and dread.

"*You! Monsieur,*" she faltered. "*You here!*"

"Yes, Fanchette, it is I; and furthermore, I came all the way to France expressly to *see you.*"

"To see *me,*" echoed Fanchette. "Monsieur, I do not understand."

"Well, then," said Mark, "I will endeavor to explain." And he proceeded to tell his story: the loss of Cleo's ring, of her sorrow and despair, and his own belief that Vivian Sinclair was responsible for its disappearance.

"I do not understand her motive," he went on, "Cleo is so gentle, good and kind to every

one. She was always kind to you, was she not, Fanchette? ”

“Indeed she was, Monsieur,” answered Fanchette.

“Then, my girl,” said Mark, reading guilt in her face, and making a bold move, “*how could* you take that ring, that she prized so highly, away from her? To please your dishonorable mistress, of course; for I know you did not desire the ring yourself. Come, Fanchette, I will be lenient if you will tell me the truth. No one shall know of this but ourselves. If you refuse to tell me the truth here quietly, I shall be obliged to resort to other means, and you will be publicly disgraced. I read the truth in your face, Fanchette; you took the ring to gratify some whim of your mistress.”

Fanchette burst into tears. For a time her sobs prevented her answering. At length she raised her head and said:

“Monsieur, I *did* take the ring, and, as you say, it was at Mlle. Sinclair’s desire. I assure you, I have never known peace since. I had no ill-will or malice against Madame Patrick. On the contrary, I always admired and liked her. As for caring myself for the ring, I never

gave it a thought. I have bitterly regretted taking it, it was such a detestable act."

She then proceeded to tell Mark everything connected with the affair, feeling much relieved at thus unburdening herself.

"Has Miss Sinclair still got the ring in her possession?" inquired Mark.

"You may be sure she has," answered the girl. "She will not part with it, having risked so much to gain it. But she never mentioned the ring to me again, after she found it in her bureau drawer where I had put it. One thing I noticed, however, that forever after the day she found the ring, she used always to wear around her neck a tiny pink silk cord, with a little silken bag attached to it, and I am convinced that Madame Patrick's ring is in that little bag. Night or day it never left her neck. You know I always helped her to dress and so had a chance to know the truth."

Mark thanked the girl and spoke kindly and soothingly to her.

"I cannot blame *you*, Fanchette," he said, "although your taking the ring was a dastardly act, but I know you were lured on by brilliant promises and a desire to serve your mistress.

I am sure you have repented your deed. Let it be a lesson to you, and we will bury the secret between us."

So saying, Mark bid adieu to Fanchette and took his leave.

CHAPTER IX.

“Slander, whose edge is sharper than a sword;
Whose tongue outvenoms all the worms of the Nile.”

—SHAKESPEARE.

It was early in March when Mark went abroad. Cleo missed his presence, which had grown so dear to her, and took little interest in society. To pass the time she spent her days in work and study. She read the best books, and daily passed several hours a day at her piano, practising Beethoven, Chopin, and many others of her favorite composers. She also finished several beautiful specimens of embroidery; for she was an adept at this charming and womanly occupation.

She sat by a sunny window in her own little sitting-room one morning, busily engaged upon a bit of needlework. This room was as unlike the luxurious boudoir of Vivian Sinclair as were the characters of the two women.

Cleo's room was modest and dainty, like her

own personality. It was very light in tone, most of the furnishings being in ivory white, although there were several specimens of genuine old colonial heirlooms, which Cleo greatly prized.

On one side of the room stood the quaint old "swell" front bureau, which had belonged to her great-grandmother, plain and severe in outline. A piece of genuine old homespun linen covered the top, upon which stood a wonderful old antique jewel casket of the time of Marie Antoinette. It was made of dull red morocco, with tarnished old brass mountings, pulls, feet, etc.

The mirror was another antique, a canopy top, with painting over the glass of a dejected lady, in Empire costume, weeping over a tomb with mortuary urn upon its pedestal.

It is a strange fact that the women of the Empire period, judging from old pictures, samplers, etc., must have spent a large portion of their time weeping at tombs, in the most graceful attitudes imaginable, and with their draperies very properly and artistically arranged.

A superb bust in white marble stood upon a

pedestal in one corner of the room. It was the Clytie of the British Museum, Cleo's favorite work of art.

There was little that was modern, excepting the well-filled bookcase, the dainty writing-desk in imitation of "Vernis-Martin," and a few good water-colors upon the walls, one of them a Venice, by F. Hopkinson Smith.

Cleo sat quietly at her sewing when she heard a pattering of feet and the happy sound of children's laughter. Presently there was a tap at the door, and before she could answer the summons, it was thrown unceremoniously open, and her two children came trooping in.

"See, mamma," cried the older of the two, a fine lad of twelve years—"see what grandpa has given us;" and he opened his hand, disclosing a shining silver half-dollar. "And Aggie has got one, too; and grandpa said we were to take you out for a walk, mamma, and we are to go down to Huyler's and buy you some candy. Aren't we, Aggie? And grandpa says you must not stay moping in the house so much. It is not good for you. What is moping, mamma? And will there be enough money to buy a little toy at Schawtz's beside the candy?"

Mamma, you don't want a *lot* of candy, do you?"

"One question at a time, if you please, Master Paul," said Cleo, laughing. "Never mind about my moping. I am all right. Let me see; yes, I think there will be ample money for bon-bons and one or two little toys beside. Small ones, you know. What will you have? Marbles? I believe the marble season will soon be with us."

"Will you please come, mamma?" cried both children at once.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Cleo. "What a clamor! Yes, I suppose so. I'll tell you what I'll do. Let's make a bargain. I will go with you and Aggie to Huyler's and Schawtz's if you will both accompany me to the new library, and I will show you all those wonderful pictures we were talking about the other day. Moses, and all the prophets, and the Holy Grail. Oh! so beautiful!"

The delighted children instantly consented, and ran away for their outer garments, while Cleo went to put on her walking costume.

The little party was soon walking briskly across the common on their way to Huyler's

and, after securing their bon-bons and a toy or two at Schawtz's, they took a car for the new library. It was the children's first visit to this superb building; they entered the vestibule with hushed voices, and gazed almost with awe at the massive lions on the grand staircase. Cleo took much interest in describing the frescoes to her children.

They were all busily engaged looking and admiring, when they were startled by a voice near them:

"Good morning, Cleo! How 'd' do, babies?"

Turning, they beheld Vivian Sinclair.

"Are you looking at the pictures, children? Well, run along and see that beautiful lady over there and that dreadful snake," pointing to Sargent's "Astarte," "while mamma and I have a little chat."

The children obediently turned and walked away.

"It is a great treat to see a friend these days, Cleo," said Vivian. "Everybody seems to have deserted society. Agnes Hastings has been ill for a month. *You* never show yourself nowadays, and Mark Anthony has gone off, no

one knows where, mound-hunting, and I *do* miss him so. He was at our house so much," she said, eying Cleo narrowly, "and he was always so charming and entertaining. When a man is so very fascinating, you know, we poor women overlook his little weaknesses, don't we?"

"I was not aware that Mr. Anthony had any little weaknesses worth mentioning," said Cleo. "I always supposed him to be different from most other men."

"Dear! dear!" laughed Vivian, "what an innocent you are! Have you never heard about that affair he had in Egypt? She was a Fellah woman, or something, I believe."

Cleo started visibly.

"No," said Cleo, coldly, "I never did."

"Of course he could not marry her, but I believe he provided liberally for her and the child. Why! what's the matter, Cleo?" she exclaimed, as Cleo swayed and nearly fell.

"Nothing, I assure you," replied Cleo, feebly. "I am a trifle tired. I have taken quite a long walk this morning for me. You know I walk very little, and it overcomes me. I must take a car and return home. You will

excuse me, Vivian, this morning. Come, children, we will come another time to see the pictures." She bowed to Vivian, turned, and walked away with her children.

"I *fancy* I have done the business this time," thought Vivian. "That's the worst lie I ever told; but 'all is fair in love and war.' I do not believe Mark and Cleo are engaged, and she is such a purist, that story will crush out all her affection for Mark. I'm safe, too. She is too proud to ever speak of it, and he will never find it out."

"Mamma," said Paul, as they walked away, "wasn't it too bad that lady came and spoilt our fun? I never did like her one bit, anyway. She always makes me nervous every time I see her."

"Hush, dear!" answered Cleo. "Miss Sinclair did not mean to spoil your pleasure, I am sure. She only happened to come along while we were there."

Cleo hardly knew how she reached her home that day. Her head ached badly; her feet were like lead. She could hardly drag herself along, and she did not wish to take a car lest she might meet friends she felt she could not talk

to. She was dazed and miserable. That vile story concerning Mark was forever in her mind.

"I cannot believe it," she thought. "It is not like him. It may be false. I hope so. I will try and give him the benefit of the doubt anyway."

She kindly sent the children away to enjoy their toys and bon-bons, and putting on a tea-gown in place of her walking costume, she lay down upon her bed and wept tears of misery.

Thus a week passed, until one day dear old Grandpa Patrick, who loved Cleo as his own child, said to her:

"Cleo, my dear girl, I do not like the way you are looking. You eat nothing, and are as pale as a ghost. You need a change, my dear, and I want you to go with the Pinkneys to Europe: I mean Egypt. They are only going upon a short trip; just to see the Pyramids and the Sphynx, and to get a whiff of ocean air. They are very anxious to have you go with them, and I have half promised for you. You will go to oblige your old father. I want to see the roses blooming in your cheeks again. Take a little time, dear, and think it over, they do not go for a week."

At first Cleo would not hear of the journey, but gradually she listened to the arguments of her friends, and at last decided to go, as the trip was not to be a long one.

CHAPTER X.

“Alas!—how light a cause may move
Dissension between hearts that love.”
—“The Light of the Harem.”

ONE blustering day late in March, Mark Anthony found himself once again in his native city, and, after a bath, change of apparel, and one of “Aunty” Hoyt’s best lunches, he started for the residence of the Patricks. The door was opened by Elise in answer to his ring.

He greeted the girl kindly, and then inquired for Cleo.

“She is not at home, Monsieur,” said Elise.
“She is gone.”

“Gone!” repeated Mark. “Gone where? I suppose she will return in an hour or two. I will come again later.”

“Has not Monsieur heard that Mrs. Patrick has gone to Egypt with the Pinkneys? She sailed nearly two weeks ago.”

“To Egypt?” echoed Mark, aghast.

“Yes, Monsieur; but I have a package she left with me for you. Excuse me, Monsieur, I will bring it.”

In a few moments Elise returned and handed a small package to Mark, who took it mechanically, and, after thanking the girl, turned and quickly walked away. He hurried to his home, and went immediately to his own private room, that he might be entirely alone. As soon as he reached it he locked himself in, and frantically tore the wrappings from the package. A velvet box and a letter were disclosed. He opened the box, and beheld the lovely face of Cleo gazing at him.

“God bless her!” he murmured. He then opened the letter and read the following lines:

“MY DEAR MARK:

“You will doubtless be much surprised to find me gone upon your return home, and I must say I am going somewhat reluctantly; but Mr. Patrick insists upon my taking this trip, as he fancies I am not looking well. I assure you, however, there is little the matter with me. I am only a little tired. But perhaps it may be well for me to go, for lately I have

thought, my friend, that you have seemed pre-occupied and dissatisfied, and that you seemed to seek the society of others more than you used to do. Can it be that you regret? There may be another who has a claim which I have usurped unawares. So I will go, and give you time to find out your heart's desire, but do not imagine that I have seen any diminution in your great kindness to me.

“Enclosed with this I leave the miniature you asked me to have painted for you. Think of me kindly; and until we meet,

“Adieu.”

“What a strange letter!” mused Mark. “I do not understand it. What can she mean by another who has a claim? It looks as though some one had been slandering me. There is some mystery here. Can that cat have had any hand in this? I may be obliged to proceed a little farther in my investigation than I intended at first; but I cannot see why she should interfere between Cleo and myself. My poor Cleo! Ill, too!—oh, why did I leave her!”

He brooded long and sorrowfully. At last he roused himself.

"I *must* see that woman! To-day, too. I can endure this suspense no longer."

Again he donned his hat and overcoat and went forth into the street. The day was well advanced. Mark went directly to the residence of Vivian Sinclair. She entered the drawing-room shortly after he was announced, richly dressed, her face wreathed in smiles.

"My dear Mark!" she cried. "Welcome home!"

Mark greeted her most affably and seated himself near her. His eye wandered to her neck, but he saw nothing to arouse his suspicions. The talk drifted from one subject to another.

"Yes," he said, "it seems good to be home again among civilized beings. Hunting up serpent mounds, you know, isn't exactly going to the opera. And that reminds me, that I am starving for a little music. Do sing me one of your charming songs, and I will turn your leaves in the most approved society manner."

Vivian glowed with pleasure and seated herself at the piano.

Mark strode across the room and took his place beside her to turn the leaves of her music. Being very tall he towered above her. She struck the keys and began a prelude, while his eyes wandered to her fair, white neck. Could it be? Yes, unmistakably there it was, a faint pink line just inside the filmy lace at her throat.

The sight enraged Mark; he was beside himself. In a moment one hand firmly grasped the silken cord (now somewhat weakened by daily wear), while the other tore it asunder, and Mark stood there in his just wrath, grasping the cord from which dangled the little pink bag, now frayed and worn. He glanced at the bag, and through the frayed edges he beheld the gleam of greenish blue which told him plainer than words what the bag contained.

He took his knife from his pocket, and opening the bag, held up, exultantly, Cleo's turquoise ring.

"You miserable wretch!" cried Mark. "What does this mean? You thief! You fiend! Why, why? I say, did you do this thing?"

Vivian cowered.

"Mark!" she gasped. "Oh, Mark! In

Heaven's name hear me, and forgive me. Cannot you see?" she cried, miserably. "I heard that ring of Cleo's had magic power; that it would bring the one you loved to your feet. I coveted it. I hoped it would make you love me."

"*Love you!*" he shrieked. "You!—I despise you. Do you know what you have done? You have cruelly and wantonly tortured the only woman I have ever loved, my promised wife."

"Your promised wife?" repeated Vivian. "Are you going to marry Cleo Patrick, Mark?"

"God willing, I am," said Mark, solemnly.

Vivian sank into a chair. She was haggard, pale, and worn looking. She seemed to have aged ten years in as many moments.

"What shall I do?" she moaned. "Lost! ruined! despised! Oh, that I were dead!"

Mark looked at her and something like pity entered his heart.

"Vivian," he said, more gently, "you have committed a crime which would cause your name to be abhorred should this story ever be known. Through your perfidy my poor Cleo

is now a wanderer thousands of miles away; but I shall start for Egypt immediately, in search of my poor girl. So, you see, your evil deeds have availed you nothing. I never loved you,—I never could,—and if there was not another woman in the world I would not marry you. But you are a woman; you have a very respectable family, and—I will spare you and them. Your evil story shall never be made public. You know you can trust me for that. From to-day, I pass out of your life. Forget that I ever existed, and try to be a better woman.”

So saying, he turned and left her forever.

CHAPTER XI.

“What can I give thee back, O liberal and princely giver,
Who has brought the gold and purple of thine heart unstained?”

—MRS. BROWNING, “Sonnets from the Portuguese.”

MARK ANTHONY recrossed the Atlantic in the first steamer which left the harbor of Boston. He made no stops excepting what were absolutely demanded by the journey. He soon found himself upon English ground. Again and again he hastened on without delay; Marseilles, Malta, Alexandria, had no attractions for him; day and night he travelled on, until he was once again in Cairo.

He drove directly to Shepherd's Hotel and engaged comfortable rooms. Tired and nearly worn out by his long journey, he took a light lunch and retired to rest, utterly oblivious to the heat and noise.

The next morning he awoke much refreshed. He rang his bell; a native servant appeared in answer to the summons. Mark ordered him to

bring coffee and rolls, and when he returned with the desired articles, proceeded to question him closely.

"Many visitors in the house?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes, there are many," was the reply.

"Several Turkish gentlemen, also French and Russian; an English milord, and a party of Americans."

"How many Americans?" asked Mark.

"Well," said the man, "in this party were an elderly gentleman and his lady, with their daughter, and another one, very charming."

"Do you know their names?"

"No, excellency, I do not, but I can ascertain."

"Very well, then. Find out immediately. I say, what's your name?"

"Yussef, your excellency," answered the man; and he hurried away for the desired information. He soon returned with the names of the party.

"Mr. and Mrs. Pinkney and their daughter, and the lovely lady was Mrs. Patrick."

Mark's heart beat with pleasure. She was safe, well and near him. It was enough.

He thanked Yussef and dropped a coin in his

hand which caused him to stare in surprise at its size.

Mark now proceeded to dress himself with unusual care. When he was ready he descended to the garden below. Almost the first person he beheld was Mrs. Pinkney, pacing slowly along the walks, and holding a sun umbrella over her head.

Mark advanced when she was not looking his way, and, reaching out, lightly took the umbrella from her hand.

"Allow *me* to carry your umbrella, Mrs. Pinkney?" he said, in a hearty voice, watching the effect of his sudden appearance, with laughing eyes and mouth.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" she cried. "Mark Anthony! You here?"

"Why not, Mrs. Pinkney?" answered Mark. "You know Egypt is my happy hunting-ground. I am always here, more or less."

The astute lady gazed at him thoughtfully.

"You cannot fool me, my boy," she thought. "You have not posted way over here for *antiquities* this time. You are after nothing older than Cleo Patrick. I see it all now; they've had some sort of misunderstanding, and I'm not a

true Bostonian if I don't set matters right between them."

She said nothing of her suspicions, but plied him with questions about mutual friends in Boston. All the time her busy brain was at work.

"How are you enjoying your trip?" he inquired.

"Very much," she replied, "only I am somewhat worried about Mrs. Patrick. You know she came along with us, and she seems so miserable. By the way, Mark, you could do me a great favor this morning—a great, big favor. I wonder if you would?"

"You can rely upon me, Mrs. Pinkney, 'even to the half of my kingdom.'"

"Well, then, order some sort of conveyance and follow our party out to the Pyramids. That foolish Ruth of mine insisted upon making an attempt to climb Cheops to-day. Mrs. Patrick has gone with Ruth and her father, but there is an English lord, who is staying here in the house, who has annoyed Cleo exceedingly by his unwelcome attentions. His name is Bittulph. As soon as he ascertained this morning where our party were going, I heard him

order a lunch put up and a carriage, and I am afraid he will follow them out there and spoil poor Cleo's pleasure. Go out, Mark, won't you? I cannot tell you how persistently Lord Bittulph has worried Cleo by his persecutions; for I call it little less."

Mark hurriedly assured Mrs. Pinkney he would go at once. He rushed off to find Yussef, and ordered him to call a carriage with fast horses and have a nice lunch put up. In half an hour all was ready, and the carriage rolled away out over the Pyramid road.

The ride out to the Pyramids was enchanting. The fine macadamized road would have done credit to a Parisian boulevard. The soft, balmy air was restful, and quieted Mark's unstrung nerves. The sky was the warm blue of the tropics, and cutting clearly against it were the straight, sharp lines of the Pyramids.

In an hour and a half he arrived within ten minutes' walk of the Pyramids. He left the carriage in charge of the driver, and proceeded to walk on alone. As he drew near he looked up and beheld Mr. Pinkney and Ruth, who had apparently begun the ascent but a short time before. Ruth recognized him, and frantically

waved her handkerchief, like Bluebeard's sister-in-law, at the same time pointing to one side with her finger.

"She must mean Cleo," he thought, for well he knew his secret had been guessed by his friends at home.

"Cleo is there; I will go around."

He nodded his head and started around the base of Cheops. The immense granite blocks hid the other side, but as he drew near he heard the sound of voices, unmistakably English.

"I absolutely refuse to take that answer," he heard a man's deep voice saying; "you *shall* be my wife. I will worry you until you are glad to marry me to get rid of me. Perhaps you will condescend to tell me your reasons for refusing to marry an English lord, who is rich enough to gratify your every whim?"

Mark had advanced quite near without being seen. He beheld Cleo gazing at the man with a look of abhorrence upon her face.

"You cad!" shouted Mark, coming forward. "I will tell you one reason why this lady will not marry you. It is because she is already my *promised wife*, and we are to be married within a week."

Cleo rushed towards him, her face suffused with color, and a happy light in her eyes.

"Mark!" she cried. "Oh, how glad I am to see you here."

Lord Bittulph glanced contemptuously at Mark, but was nevertheless much impressed by the American's stalwart form and apparent strength.

"I have not done with this lady yet," he said.

"Yes, you have," replied Mark, "and mind what I say. If you ever again attempt to give her one moment's annoyance, there will be one lord less in the British aristocracy. Good-day, sir. Come, Cleo, I have a carriage waiting."

Together they walked around to the spot where he had seen Ruth and her father. They found them just descending to the ground.

"Mark, my dear boy," cried Mr. Pinkney. Ruth came forward and gave him her hand. "It is of no use," she said, ruefully. "No ascent for me; the fates forbid. This is the land of Kismet. This is the third time I've tried to go up old Cheops, and I won't try again. No, I'll go home to Boston and 'do' Bunker Hill monument instead. Serves me

right, too, for I never saw that blessed shaft nearer than Boston. I see now I did not do my duty at home. I have wandered after strange gods."

"You are still young, Miss Ruth," said Mark. "There is plenty of time for you to do your duty by Bunker Hill and the State House."

"Bless its old golden dome!" cried Ruth. "How is every one in Boston?"

"I'll tell you what," said Mark in reply. "You all come out to my carriage and lunch with me, and I will tell you what I can. I've brought out enough for a reception."

Every one agreed to Mark's plan, and were soon enjoying their repast in true bohemian manner. There was no trace of the haughty Bostonian in that merry party. After lunch it was decided to return to the hotel.

"I will go in the carriage with papa," said Ruth, artfully, knowing well that Mark and Cleo were anxious for a quiet talk together. "I can't breathe with a lot in the carriage with me. Cleo, won't you please ride back with Mr. Anthony, and give me half the carriage to myself?"

"You horrid, greedy, selfish girl," cried Cleo, laughing. "Well, I never push myself where I am not wanted. You can keep your old carriage all to yourself. I'm sure Mark's is much nicer."

So it was settled that Cleo should drive back with Mark. He saw her comfortably seated, and, seating himself opposite to her, waited until the carriage was on its way. He then said, in a low voice, so that the driver could not overhear: "Cleo, why did you run away from me? I will not ask you to explain this mystery to me now; but after you become my wife you must tell me all about it; and my wife you must become before the week is ended. I want the right to protect and defend you here in this strange land. I have brought the wedding-ring along with me."

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a little jeweller's box and handed it to her. She mechanically took it in her hand and lifted the cover like one in a dream. As she glanced at its contents, she started, and exclaimed in genuine surprise:

"My ring! My blessed Egyptian ring! Mark, *where* did you find it?"

“Not to-day, dear. There is no time for explanations now, but later you shall know *all*. Cleo,” he continued, “I am tired of playing hide-and-seek with you. I have followed you thousands of miles. Does not that prove my love and devotion? Now, I want my answer. Will you marry me within a week?”

“I think I shall be obliged to,” replied Cleo, laughing. “As Lord Bittulph said, ‘I shall be obliged to marry you to get rid of you.’ Yes, let it be as soon as you wish, Mark, for I have come to the conclusion I am not capable of taking care of myself. Only do allow me time to get up a decent wedding gown. No self-respecting woman likes to be dowdy at her wedding. You didn’t expect I travelled with a supply of wedding gowns in my baggage, did you? And this is *such* a delightful place to purchase silks and gauzes and tissues.”

“Very well,” said Mark, “I will give you just five days. This is Thursday. Let it be next Wednesday. Mr. Pinkney will give you away, and Ruth will be your bridesmaid. You ladies and a good modiste can do wonders in that time. Bless me!” he cried, in mock irony, “what *comfort* you will all take!”

CHAPTER XII.

“ Love took up the glass of time, and turned it in his glowing hands :

Every moment lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sand.”

—TENNYSON.

“ A lady so richly clad as she—beautiful exceeding.”

—COLERIDGE.

As Mark left her to give his orders for his trip to the Pyramids, Mrs. Pinkney turned and walked slowly towards the hotel. As she passed along the corridor on her way to her apartments, an attendant respectfully handed her a package of letters and papers.

“ News from home,” she thought. “ These must have come in the same steamer with Mark.”

She hastened to her room and read first the letters, then the papers. She was reading the latest of these, when she gave a startled exclamation.

“ Good Heavens ! ” she exclaimed. “ Vivian Sinclair ! Suicide ! ” And she quickly read

the description given with horribly minute attention to details.

"Poor, foolish girl," at length sighed good Mrs. Pinkney. "What *could* have led to such a thing? That girl had beauty, wealth, and a high social position; and yet she could bring herself to commit such an act! I cannot understand it."

Several hours later the merry party arrived from the Pyramids. They were all impressed with Mrs. Pinkney's thoughtful and troubled face. She briefly told them of Vivian's tragic death. A hush fell upon the party.

"Heaven give her rest and peace," said Mark, impressively. But it was not until Cleo had been his cherished wife for many months that she knew the truth concerning Vivian's death and the finding of her Egyptian ring.

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The next few days were very busy ones for Cleo and her lady friends; happy days they were, too. There were visits to the various oriental bazars where everything from attar of roses to oriental carpets were for sale. Cleo fairly revelled in the exquisite fabrics offered for her choice. The selection of the bridal

dress was finally accomplished, and the modiste went to work to fashion the gown within the appointed time.

Mark was no less busy in his way. He hired the largest apartment possible, and ordered it lavishly decorated with palms, papyrus, and lotus. Then he engaged a fine orchestra, and ordered the wedding breakfast to be served by the *chef* of the hotel.

The eventful Wednesday at length arrived. Cleo appeared at the appointed time leaning upon the arm of Mr. Pinkney—a vision of loveliness. She was dressed in a flowing robe of some gauzy, Eastern fabric, as light in texture and weight as thistledown. It was a deep, creamy white in color, and nearly covered with delicate tracings in golden thread. She wore no jewels, excepting a long chain of costly pearls, the gift of the groom.

“Pearls for my Cleopatra,” he said, as he threw the chain over her graceful head.

Cleo insisted upon using her fateful ring at the marriage service. And there in mystic Egypt, beside the ancient Nile, surrounded by the lotus and the palm, Mark claimed his bride, Antony his Cleopatra.

THE END.

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